PROCEEDINGS OF TDWG

Biodiversity Information Science and Standarts 1: e20263
doi: 10.3897/tdwgproceedings.1.20263

OPEN ACCESS

Conference Abstract

SPNHC 2017 Natural History Collections Biodiversity Informatics 101 Short Course Insights

Holly Little‡, Deborah Paul§, Jennifer Strotman‡

‡ Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, Washington, DC, United States of America
§ Florida State University, Tallahassee, United States of America

Corresponding author: Holly Little (littleh@si.edu), Deborah Paul (dpaul@fsu.edu)

Received: 14 Aug 2017 | Published: 14 Aug 2017

Citation: Little H, Paul D, Strotman J (2017) SPNHC 2017 Natural History Collections Biodiversity Informatics 101 Short Course Insights. Proceedings of TDWG 1: e20263. https://doi.org/10.3897/tdwgproceedings.1.20263

Abstract

Many digitization-focused talks at recent Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC, spnhc.org) meetings illustrate the impact of biodiversity informatics tools, standards, and resources on collections management tasks. Collections and data managers need up-to-date data skills and knowledge to manage and curate their growing digital collections. The National Science Foundation (NSF) Program, Advancing the Digitization of Biological Collections (ADBC), highlights the need for collections informatics literacy in support of creating and sustaining digital resources. The vision for a Network Integrated Biocollections Alliance (NIBA), Beach et al. 2010 conceptualized the necessity for a program such as the ADBC. In their subsequent NIBA Implementation Plan, Beach et al. 2012, goal three is "Enhance the training of existing collections staff and create the next generation of biodiversity information managers."

In the rapidly changing digital collections landscape, the collection staff find their roles evolving. Technical discussions in meeting symposia and some demos showcasing informatics and technological advances may often cover both expertise and background knowledge the audience lacks. In addition, where there are challenges in informatics literacy within the collections community, one can also observe a breakdown in understanding and communication of overlapping informatics-related goals and efforts between collections staff and their informatics counterparts and administration.

© Little H et al. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

In order to facilitate overall understanding of the biodiversity informatics landscape, we developed the Natural History Collections Biodiversity Informatics 101 short course, offered just before the start of the SPNHC 2017 meeting. The aim of this one day short course was to provide introductory materials on a wide range of biodiversity informatics topics. Topics covered included the basics of natural history collection data and digital object lifecycle management, including digitally archiving as well as mobilizing collections data and participation in global initiatives. The course was led by museum and informatics professionals with various expertise in natural history collections digitization and informatics.

The presentations were distributed across three main themes: 1) what is natural history biodiversity informatics? 2) what are some of the current relevant projects? and 3) how to get involved. We were able to gather feedback during the course day, throughout the SPNHC 2017 meeting, and in a post-short-course survey. Here we share an assessment of the course, the feedback received as it relates to skills and workflow assessments and needs, possible future iterations of this short course, and a better understanding of the informatics literacy skills landscape of the SPNHC community. We seek your input on this topic for the 2018 TDWG and SPNHC joint meeting and for TDWG's future role in this capacity building effort.

Keywords

biodiversity informatics, SPNHC, TDWG, capacity building, collections management, digitization

Presenting author

Holly Little

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the many people and organizations who contributed to the content of this course. This includes: The Smithsonian Department of Paleobiology (course concept)*, The Natural History Museum (NHM), The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, The Denver Botanic Garden (DBG), Center for Biological Research Collections - Indiana University, Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences - Indiana University, Chicago Academy of Sciences - Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, The Field Museum, VertNet, Invertebrate Paleontology - University of Colorado Museum of Natural History, Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, University of Wisconsin - Wisconsin Insect Research Collection, Australian National Insect Collection (ANIC), Cheadle Center for Biodiversity and Ecological Restoration (CCBER), The Harvard University Herbaria, Rutgers University -

The Chrysler Herbarium, Integrated Digitized Biocollections (iDigBio)*, the Darwin Core Hour (DCH) team, and the Illinois Natural History Survey Prairie Research Institute - TaxonWorks. *Asterisks indicate course organizers.

References

- Beach J, Cook J, Ford LS, Gropp R, Hanken J, Joyce K, McDade L, Thiers B (2012) Implementation Plan for the Network Integrated Biocollections Alliance. https://www.aibs.org/public-policy/NIBA_Implementation_Plan.pdf. Accessed on: 2017-5-06.
- Beach J, Blum S, Donoghue M, Ford L, Guralnick R, Mares M, Thiers B, Westneat M, Wheeler Q, Wiegmann B (2010) A Strategic Plan for Establishing a Network Integrated Biocollections Alliance. https://digbiocol.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/niba_brochure.pdf . Accessed on: 2017-5-06.